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THE SENATE  
STATE OF MICHIGAN  
**MICHAEL PRUSI**  
SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

**COMMITTEES:**  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
SENATE FISCAL AGENCY  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS

September 21, 2010

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 1014 today. I apologize that I cannot be here today in person to testify.

SB 1014 would amend the Revised School Code to allow the Michigan Department of Education to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a federally recognized Native American tribe or the boards of a school district or public school academy to allow a teacher without a Michigan Teaching Certificate to teach a Native American language and culture class, and allow students taking the class to receive foreign or world language credit under the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The need for this legislation was brought to my attention by the Hannahville Indian Community in the Upper Peninsula, which seeks to teach Potawatomi language at its K-12 Public School Academy. However, in the case of the Hannahville tribe, as well as other Michigan tribes, the only qualified instructors available to teach the language are tribal elders, who are fluent in language and culture, but lack conventional teacher certification. Additionally, no universities in Michigan, to my knowledge, offer the coursework necessary for a teacher to earn a "highly qualified" status or degree in these native tribal languages.

The federal Native American Languages Act includes language that encourages states to "allow exceptions to teacher certification requirements . . . when such teacher certification requirements hinder the employment of qualified teachers who teach in Native American languages".

Language is the foundation of any culture, and as such, Native American language revitalization efforts at Hannahville and other Michigan tribes seek to ensure the continued survival not only of these languages, but associated cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage as well. Tribal elders are often the only tribal members with the ability to speak such languages fluently, and it is important that the State of Michigan work with our neighbor tribes to eliminate any unnecessary roadblocks to ensuring these languages can be passed on to future generations.

SB 1014 would allow Native American language and culture to be taught in any school district electing to do so throughout the State of Michigan. The MOU would be for three years, and

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September 22, 2010

would require mastery of the tribal language as well as requirements for renewal or continuing approval of the non-certificated teacher.

While tribes may offer such instruction now, SB 1014 would also encourage all students, whether they are a member of a tribe or not, to study Native American languages and culture without worry that the coursework or credits may not meet Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. As the MMC requirements for foreign language credit first take effect for students graduating with in the Class of 2016 (or entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade this fall), passage of this legislation this year would provide two years for public schools and PSAs to prepare teachers to teach students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2012.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL PRUSI  
Senate Democratic Leader  
38<sup>th</sup> District



**HANNAHVILLE**  
INDIAN COMMUNITY  
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**ESTABLISHMENT OF MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA) WITH  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH POTAWATOMI  
LANGUAGE TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND POTAWATOMI LANGUAGE  
CLASS MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM CREDITS**

**RESOLUTION 081209-D**

- WHEREAS:** The Hannahville Indian Community is a Federally recognized Indian Tribe under the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, "48 Stat.984", as amended by the Act of July 15, 1935, "49stat.378."; **and**
- WHEREAS:** The Hannahville Indian Community is concerned about the future of its tribal members and the future of the community; **and**
- WHEREAS:** The Hannahville Indian Community recognizes the need for a dynamic and permanent language acquisition program, drawing on the knowledge from Potawatomi speakers, to promote and ensure the survival of the Potawatomi Language in our community as well as in our Tribal school as outlined in Hannahville's *2004 Keepers of the Fire: Ensuring the Survival of the Potawatomi Language Strategic Plan*; **and**
- WHEREAS:** The Hannahville Indian Community acknowledges the significant progress already made during the three years of the ANA Language Implementation Grant that has resulted in development of a new Potawatomi language curriculum (aligned to Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmarks), multi-media resource materials, computer language labs, language web site and two online language courses (a nine-week and a 36 week course); **and**
- WHEREAS:** The Hannahville Indian Community understands that recent state legislation has established new Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) High School Graduation Requirements that now include one Online Course or Learning Experience credit and two World Language credits effective for the graduation class of 2016; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Hannahville Indian Community acknowledges the Native American Language Act (Sec. 104.) which states that "It is the policy of the United States to—

KENNETH MESHIGAUD  
Tribal Chairperson

ELAINE MESHIGAUD  
Vice Chairperson

TAMMY WANDAHSEGA  
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LISA MESHIGAUD  
Treasurer

**Council Members:** Robin Halfaday, Earl Meshigaud, Ann Saboo, Henry Philemon Jr., John Meshigaud, Jeremiah Jackson, Chad Harris, William Sagataw

- (2) allow exceptions to teacher certification requirements for Federal programs, and programs funded in whole or in part by the Federal Government, for instruction in Native American languages when such teacher certification requirements hinder the employment of qualified teachers who teach in Native American languages, and to encourage State and territorial governments to make similar exceptions;
- (4) encourage State and local education programs to work with Native American parents, educators, Indian tribes, and other Native American governing bodies in the implementation of programs to put this policy into effect;
- (5) recognize the right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies to use the Native American languages as a medium of instruction in all schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior;
- (6) fully recognize the inherent right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies, States, territories, and possessions of the United States to take action on, and give official status to, their Native American languages for the purpose of conducting their own business;
- (7) support the granting of comparable proficiency achieved through course work in a Native American language the same academic credit as comparable proficiency achieved through course work in a foreign language, with recognition of such Native American language proficiency by institutions of higher education as fulfilling foreign language entrance or degree requirements; and
- (8) encourage all institutions of elementary, secondary and higher education, where appropriate, to include Native American languages in the curriculum in the same manner as foreign languages and to grant proficiency in Native American languages the same full academic credit as proficiency in foreign languages";  
and

**WHEREAS:** Hannahville Indian Community further acknowledges the Native American Language Act (Sec. 105.) which emphasizes "No Restrictions" by stating "The right of Native Americans to express themselves through the use of Native American languages shall not be restricted in any public proceeding, including publicly supported education programs;" **and**

**WHEREAS:** The Hannahville Indian Community, Tribal Council and Potawatomi Language Department is committed to creating a Potawatomi Language Education Board to establish policies, procedures, education and professional training levels and to determine specific criteria for Potawatomi Teacher Certification of its own staff, as well as to assure that the Potawatomi Language Curriculum is aligned to Michigan Merit Curriculum World Language Standards and Benchmarks.